

**REPORT TO GOVERNOR MATT BLUNT
STATE OF MISSOURI**

MISSOURI WOMEN'S COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

The Missouri Women's Council was established in 1985 by the State's 83rd General Assembly to identify and address issues affecting the economic and employment status of women in Missouri. The first name of the council was the Missouri Council on Women's Economic Development and Training (MCWEDT). The name was changed to the Missouri Women's Council in 1994. The Council consists of 15 members, 11 appointed by the Governor, 2 members of the Missouri Senate and 2 members of the Missouri House of Representatives. The members of the Council are Vicky Hartzler, Chair, Kerri McBee Black, Michelle Esswein, Terri Gray, Sandy Jones, Nanci King, Lorene James, Sarah Murray, Lori Smith-Patterson, Valerie White, Donayle Whitmore-Smith, The Honorable Marilyn Ruestman, The Honorable Maida Coleman and The Honorable Luann Ridgeway.

Section 186.014 RSMo state that the Director of the Department of Economic Development, upon consultation with the Council, shall recommend for appointment to the Governor an Executive Director for the Missouri Women's Council. The Executive Director shall be responsible for implementing programs initiated by the Council; and performing other duties as defined by the Council.

Since the inception of the Council in 1985 the mission has broadened. The Council now acts as a resource and referral center connecting women from all socioeconomic backgrounds to information ranging from employment and non-traditional programs, domestic violence and health issues, to entrepreneurship and advocacy.

In the creation of and the continuing support of the Council, the Governor and the Missouri General Assembly recognize that women constitute a group whose life chances and life stages often differ remarkably from those of men, and because of these differences, carry a disproportionate share of the burden of economic hardship.

Women in Missouri rank:

- 35th in educational attainment, 2000; (percent of women with Four or More Years of College)
- 27th in the earnings ratio with men;
- 13th in labor force participation
- 16th in the number employed in managerial or professional occupations
- 20th in the percent of women with health insurance
- 21st in business ownership
- 19th in the percent of women living above poverty
- 28th in composite health and well being index;
- 24th in elected office composite index.

The Missouri Women's Council suggests that the numbers shown above reflect a need to adapt and/or create programs and services to better address the needs of women.

The members of the Missouri Women's Council are committed to the pioneering of changes necessary to advance the economic, social and political parity of women in Missouri.

Council Activities

Recently, The Missouri Women's Council designed/added *The Women Owned Business Network*: The web site is dedicated to helping women-owned businesses succeed, by reaching out to new markets and help promote women-owned businesses to make it easier to find and support women-owned companies and the products/services they offer. The web site can be viewed at www.wobnetwork.mo.gov.

The Women's Council offer fact sheets that contain the latest statistics and information on a wide variety of issues, including high school drop outs, education and earnings, hot jobs for the 21st century, Missouri's temporary assistance, women in high-tech jobs, younger women in America, pay equity, women's health, women in public life, women-owned businesses, non traditional occupations, breast cancer, and advocacy. The Fact Sheets are available upon request and can be downloaded from the Women's Council web site at www.womenscouncil.org.

The Missouri Women's Council along with MERIC, a division of The Department of Economic Development, have completed a Self-Sufficiency study. After the completion of the study the Council published the *Missouri Family Affirming Wages: Financial independence measures for Missouri families*. It is available either by hard copy or by viewing the Missouri Women's Council web site at www.womenscouncil.org.

The Missouri Family Affirming Wage: Financial independence measures for Missouri families is a research and advocacy tool that calculates the amount of money different family types should earn to meet their basic needs. By looking at data for expenditures in such categories as food, housing, childcare, health care, transportation and taxes, the publication responds to the need for precise, reliable information about what it really costs a family to live in different parts of the country and the state. This in-depth report will provide a tool to educate the public, enlighten corporations and statewide organizations, impact career and educational choices for young women, and inform policy and decision-makers throughout the state.

The Missouri Women's Council recently revised the *Missouri Women's Resource Guide*. *The Missouri Women's Resource Guide* is a directory of programs, services and web sites related to issues of interest to women. It is our hope that this guide will serve as a valuable resource for addressing the needs and concerns of women in Missouri. Our goal is to provide a wide array of information and choices across partisan beliefs.

The Missouri Women's Council sends out a monthly e-newsletter. The e-newsletter is an educational resource to keep women informed about programs available to them and other areas of interest.

The Missouri Women's Council provides a web site www.womenscouncil.org. It is a portal designed to connect women to a network of accessible, high quality advisory services and information ranging from employment and training, to information on starting your own business, to how to balance work and family.

The Missouri Women's Council created an exhibit booth to promote the Women's Council. The exhibit is used at functions such as conferences/trade shows, State Fair, and other promotional activities.

The Missouri Women's Council each year presents the Award of Distinction. This award is given to individuals and/or organizations that have made a significant impact upon women and their families.

The Missouri Women's Council along with Missouri Small Business & Technology Development Centers presented the FastTrac NewVenture Program for women entrepreneurs. The goal of the FastTrac NewVenture program is to help women determine whether their business idea has a market, can make a profit, and can provide the money they need. The programs help women build their business plan one section at a time by conducting research and answering questions for each step of action.

The Missouri Women's Council held a Women's Conference in Columbia, in February, 2007 and also partnered with the Missouri Department of Economic Development in hosting the Governor's Council on Economic Development in Springfield 2007. Upcoming conferences planned for 2008 are: Columbia, February 25 & 26, Cape Girardeau, May 22, and the Governor's Conference on Economic Development, September 2008.

The Missouri Women's Council drafted and passed legislation that created a special license plate for the Missouri Women's Council, promoting breast cancer awareness. To obtain the plate, a person must obtain a use authorization statement (\$25 contribution for one year renewal of your license) from the Missouri Women's Council and present the statement to the Department of Revenue at the time of registration, along with a \$15 fee and other documents required by law. Revenue collected from authorization contributions, minus any reasonable administrative cost, will be used solely for the purposes of providing breast cancer services, including but not limited to screening, treatment, staging, and follow-up services.

The Women's Council designed a "Missouri Women's History Exhibit", honoring over 60 historical Missouri women who were instrumental in breaking barriers and forging new paths. The exhibit has been in many parts of the state and will continue traveling across the State of Missouri.

Mission

According to the 2000 Census, the State of Missouri has a population of approximately 5,595,211 individuals, 2,875,034 of which are women (51.4%). The mission of the Missouri Women's Council is to support and assist women of this state as they pursue

their economic and family goals. The Council acts as a resource and referral center for women. We hope to become a 'one-stop shop' for a woman who wants to begin her own business or upgrade her skills to pursue new economic paths. We also want to provide support and information to women who want to work at home or gain a little more income while they dedicate themselves to full-time parenting. Statutes outlines several goals of the Council in the areas of promoting and increasing women's economic and employment opportunities through programs and providing information.

Duties

The duties of the Council, as specified in Section 186.106 RSMo include:

- Promoting and increasing women's economic and employment opportunities through education and training programs to aid in and ensure entry into the labor market;
- Promoting occupational mobility of women workers in lower and middle levels of employment;
- Promoting access to jobs with more skill and responsibility;
- Initiating programs to assist women in small business enterprise;
- Assuring access of women to nontraditional skilled trades;
- Promoting retraining programs and facilities;
- Applying for federal or private funds or grants;
- Conducting programs, studies, seminars and conferences on educational needs and opportunities; displaced homemakers; credits; federal and state actions affecting the rights and responsibilities of women; and women owned business enterprises.

Focus

To achieve our mission, the Council is seeking greater coordination among the state agencies serving women, maximization of existing resources for women, and use of new and existing resources where they will have the greatest impact on eliminating the economic disparity between the status of women in Missouri, relative to the women nationally and to the men in Missouri.

The Council has focused on determining the range of existing services and resources for women's economic educational and health-related concerns. This process will be on-going.

It has become apparent that women's needs and the programs designed to serve them are segmented. We are of the conviction that it is important to find ways to address the whole woman, all her needs and difficulties in the form of a "one-stop shop" whenever possible.

It is the intent of the Missouri Women's Council to build awareness, educate, promote opportunities for, and enhance the lives and well being of Missouri's women and families. Hardest hit are the individuals living at the poverty level, the majority of which are women and children. By providing knowledge, opportunities to enhance the employability and skill development of women, and providing a voice for their needs and concerns, we hope to assist these underserved members of Missouri and lead them to self-sufficiency.

The Missouri Women's Council acts as a resource and referral center connecting women from all socioeconomic backgrounds to information ranging from employment and non-traditional programs, domestic violence and health issues, to entrepreneurship and advocacy.

Recommendations

- Continue to expand the role of the Missouri Women's Council as a centralized clearinghouse, resource, and referral center for all Missouri women.
- Request that all state agencies coordinate and advise the Missouri Women's Council on all programs and services affecting women.
- Increase the efforts of the Missouri Women's Council in seeking federal funds and grants to support needed programs.
- Provide relevant information that is useful in the day to day activities of Missouri women.
- Foster local liaisons.
- Be proactive in utilizing the media to promote activities regarding women.
- Develop partnership coalitions.
- Increase the Missouri Women's Council statewide visibility.
- Develop programs to target young women.
- Use the website as an effective means of employment information.
- Continue to use the website to disseminate updates, issue-based briefs, information alerts, and practical tip sheets on issues.

- Continue to present and exhibit at conferences to increase the visibility of the Missouri Women's Council statewide.
- Present an affordable, annual conference, which delivers a quality and relevant program that, presents an opportunity for women to meet and network with their colleagues.
- Explore and develop partnerships with other associations to strengthen the conference program and experience.

We hope you will review this information on issues facing the women of the state of Missouri with open arms. The information stems from the Council's initiatives, policies and programs designed to promote women's social and economic opportunities in Missouri.

Despite the advancements made in the last several years, the Council believes that there is much more that needs to be done to promote and assist women in Missouri. We look forward to a continued dialogue on these issues and finding the means to implement the Council's recommendations.